Children and young people need to experience high-quality **total immersion as part of Gaelic Medium Education until they have a secure foundation in the language and a level of fluency that will enable them to build on the progress made in Gaelic.**

* Teachers’ monitoring and tracking of progress and achievement needs to ensure that children have received sufficient total immersion.
* A range of approaches are used in total immersion to enable children to hear and absorb high-quality Gaelic.
* In delivering learning in the total immersion playroom and classroom, staff need to make use of the principles of curriculum design to ensure **learning which is progressive and coherent**.
* The **‘significant aspects of learning’ and associated progression statements for literacy and Gàidhlig** have a key role in helping children to demonstrate their progress with the curricular levels for literacy and Gàidhlig.

**Role of the Adult**

Adults in the play and learning room have a key responsibility to use **high-quality Gaelic to each other and to the children**, both within the play and learning and beyond. **Staff model high-quality** **Gaelic** to children and play alongside the children as an effective approach to learning, while at the same time speaking Gaelic all of the time. Staff have many roles in the Gaelic Medium playroom and classroom: care and nurture, model Gaelic, play, acting and using prompts to aid understanding, learn and teach. Staff are important role models for children and create an environment where Gaelic is valued. While children are free to play, adults interact with them, also playing and developing lines of imagination while building vocabulary and phrases through the use of the Gaelic language. Staff talk constantly in as much Gaelic as they can, ask questions, explain what they are doing in everyday routines and when engaging in activities with children such as arts and crafts. They are aiming to enable children to hear language all of the time to help them absorb Gaelic. Children will initially listen a lot to build their understanding and respond in their mother tongue. It is also helpful to model Gaelic. In other words, repeating to children in Gaelic in a sensitive way what they are saying in their mother tongue to help them learn Gaelic.

**Learning Experiences**

Learning will firstly have a very strong focus on **listening and talking in Gaelic through a play-based curriculum**, which is widely evidenced to be the most appropriate approach for the development of young children’s early learning. Initially children who enrol in early learning and childcare centres with no previous knowledge of Gaelic will devote a lot of time to listening and absorbing Gaelic. At the early stages, children will not immediately understand all that is said to them in medium of Gaelic. Their understanding is developing and should be aided with good language techniques such **prompting, rephrasing, acting and the use of pictures**. Children then start using common phrases and Gaelic which is heard in structured activities such as singing. Children will still initially express their feelings and thoughts in English with staff using a lot of repetition and prompting, and modelling in Gaelic of what children say in English. **Through play, children will access all areas of the curriculum, building their knowledge and skills through the medium of Gaelic.** The regular changing of contexts for play, both indoors and outdoors, ensures that children’s language and vocabulary is being extended.

The role of **reading stories aloud, sound files, singing, group games and the use of rhymes** is very important in the immersion early learning and childcare centre. These should be used as part of group activities and for children to access independently. This helps children learn set phrases, which they absorb and then apply on a more independent basis. Children should be encouraged to watch, listen and interact with programmes on radio and the internet where they will hear Gaelic. It is also useful to be discussing these programmes with children. While listening to programmes is encouraged, this is not to be an approach which encourages learners to be passive. Children should be encouraged to retell stories, talk about illustrations and make up their own stories. As children play, staff need to be working alongside and interacting with children to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills in Gaelic language while also following their interests, being creative and curious.

**Developing a Gaelic Literacy Rich Environment**

**Developing Children’s Social Language**

There is also a key role for **planning and delivering group sessions** in the early level to ensure language is being developed in a progressive way. This may be centred around, for example, singing, games, including those to develop language, telling and discussing a story, using pictures, role-play, routines such as snacks and checking in activities. In this, there is an important emphasis on **developing children’s social language** so that they can begin to speak Gaelic for real and purposeful reasons. Staff need to build children’s confidence in the use of Gaelic by encouraging them in making requests and the use of social language at snack time, for example. This is done alongside the development of academic language so that they are also accessing learning across the curriculum. The development of social language helps develop language which can be used in the home. By encouraging parents to be involved in play sessions, they can be supported in knowing what language may be used at home. It is also recognised in Gaelic Medium Education, while advisable and to be encouraged, that not all parents are able to speak Gaelic to their children.

**Parental Participation**

Early engagement with parents to inform them of the benefits of Gaelic Medium Education and its link to the benefits of bilingualism is essential in securing the future of the language. This presents an **important need for very focused and effective promotional activity with parents**. Bòrd na Gàidhlig promotes Gaelic Medium Education at key points, including where there is recognised capacity to increase numbers. *Comann nam Pàrant3* also do commendable work. They organise events and visits to parents to address queries relating to Gaelic Education. They will support parents to enrol their children in early learning and childcare centres. Parents expect Gaelic Medium provision that is of the highest quality, with tangible and transparent benefits for their children. Gaelic Medium Education is open to all and it is important that **parents who are not fluent in Gaelic are aware that they are instrumental in supporting their children’s education through the medium of Gaelic**. Children’s fluency in Gaelic is enhanced by using the language outwith school. If parents wish, they need to have **clear information on the various pathways to learning Gaelic so they too can learn Gaelic with their children.**

In delivering learning in the total immersion playroom and classroom, staff need to make use of the principles of curriculum design. Over time, as learners become secure in their fluency of Gaelic, all skills will be developed together in an integrated way, using grouping of Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes across the curriculum. This will include a range of approaches to learning and teaching, for example, play, projects, learning outdoors and role-play.

**Assessment questions from ‘Literacy and Gàidhlig: Principles and Practice’**

* How well are they communicating with confidence to suit their purpose and audience and showing increasing awareness of others in interactions?
* How well are they extending their everyday and specialist vocabulary?
* How does their confidence in listening and talking help their personal development, social skills and ability to solve problems?
* To what extent are they exploring and enjoying Gàidhlig poetry and song, and stories of increasing complexity and variety and making personal responses?